

I Claim:

1. Electronic mail control software, comprising:
means for opening a window arranged to enable a user of the electronic mail applications program to select control options to be applied to an electronic mail message created using the electronic mail applications program; and
means for modifying an address to which the message is to be sent in order to direct the message to a central mail server arranged to implement said control options if one of said control options is selected.
2. Electronic mail control software as claimed in claim 1, wherein said control options include an expiration setting by which the user may select a date, time, or event, the occurrence of which will cause said message to expire.
3. Electronic mail control software as claimed in claim 1, wherein said control options include limitations on forwarding by a recipient of said message.
4. Electronic mail control software as claimed in claim 1, wherein said means for opening said window includes means for intercepting a send command generated by said electronic mail applications program and opening said window in response to interception of said send command.
5. Electronic mail control software as claimed in claim 1, further comprising means for modifying at least one entry in an address book of said electronic mail

applications program to cause mail sent to said entry to be routed through said electronic mail server.

6. A method of adding lifespan and handling limitations to an electronic mail message, comprising the steps of:

opening a window arranged to enable a user of the electronic mail applications program to select control options to be applied to an electronic mail message created using the electronic mail applications program; and

modifying an address to which the message is to be sent in order to direct the message to a central mail server arranged to implement said control options if one of said control options is selected.

7. A method as claimed in claim 6, wherein said control options include an expiration setting by which the user may select a date, time, or event, the occurrence of which will cause said message to expire.

8. A method as claimed in claim 6, wherein said control options include limitations on forwarding by a recipient of said message.

9. A method as claimed in claim 6, wherein the step of opening said window includes the step of intercepting a send command generated by said electronic mail applications program and opening said window in response to interception of said send command.

10. A method as claimed in claim 6, further comprising the step of modifying at least one entry in an address book of said electronic mail applications program to cause mail sent to said entry to be routed through said electronic mail server.

11. An electronic mail system, comprising:

a first computer on which is installed message origination software and which is connected to a network capable of carrying an electronic mail message;

at least one recipient computer also connected to said network; and

a viewer applet installed on said recipient computer,

said viewer applet being arranged to control a manner in which an information in an electronic mail wrapper associated with the electronic mail message is presented to a recipient of the message, said control including selection of information to present and control of coupling of the information and the message.

12. An electronic mail system as claimed in claim 11, further comprising a central electronic mail server connected to said network, said electronic mail server being arranged to cooperate with said viewer applet to achieve said control of the manner in which the electronic mail wrapper is presented to the recipient.

13. An electronic mail system as claimed in claim 12, wherein upon request by the recipient, said central mail server encrypts said electronic mail message and sends it to said viewer applet, and said viewer applet being arranged to decrypt said message so as to display said message with information deleted from said wrapper.

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14. A method of controlling an electronic mail message transmitted over a network, comprising the steps of:

after transmission of the electronic mail message over the network, identifying and selecting information in a message wrapper; and

encrypting said electronic mail message so that only said selected information can be viewed with the message using a viewer applet installed on a recipient computer.

15. A method of controlling an electronic mail message transmitted over a network, comprising the steps of:

before transmission of the electronic mail message over the network, attaching limitations on processing and handling of the electronic mail message by a recipient;

initially transmitting said electronic mail message over said network to a central electronic mail server;

storing said electronic mail message at said electronic mail server;

upon request by the recipient, encrypting said electronic mail message, sending the encrypted electronic mail message to a viewer applet installed on said recipient computer, and storing said encrypted message on the recipient computer;

viewing said message by decrypting said electronic mail message using the viewer applet and a session key supplied by the central electronic mail server; and

causing said central electronic mail server and viewer applet to implement said processing and handling limitations.

16. A method as claimed in claim 15, wherein said session key is supplied by said central server each time said message is to be viewed.

17 A method as claimed in claim 15, wherein said session key must be renewed periodically in order to view said message.

18. A method as claimed in claim 15, wherein said viewer applet is required to establish communications with the central server periodically in order to ensure that the clock used by the viewer applet is functioning properly.

19. An electronic mail system, comprising:

a first computer on which is installed message origination software arranged to assign message processing limitations to an electronic mail message and which is connected to a network capable of carrying said electronic mail message;

at least one recipient computer also connected to said network;

a viewer applet; and

a central electronic mail server connected to said network, said message origination software being arranged to send said electronic mail message to said electronic mail server, said electronic mail server being arranged to store information concerning said electronic mail message and, upon request by the recipient, encrypt said electronic mail message and send it to said viewer applet, wherein said viewer applet is arranged to decrypt said viewer applet as it is sent so as to display said message,

wherein said viewer applet is also arranged to store at least a portion of said message that has been stripped of said information by said central server, and

wherein said processing limitations are implemented by said central electronic mail server and said viewer applet.

20. An electronic mail system as claimed in claim 19, wherein said message is encrypted by said central mail server using a public key generated by the viewer applet, said viewer applet being arranged to generate said public key and also a corresponding private key used to decrypt said message.

21. An electronic mail system as claimed in claim 19, wherein said viewer applet is further arranged to permit a user to request forwarding of said electronic mail message to a second recipient computer, said central mail server being arranged to strip and store information concerning said message, a copy of the viewer applet installed on said second recipient computer being arranged to store said stripped message.

22. A method of controlling an electronic mail message transmitted over a network, comprising the steps of:

before transmission of the electronic mail message over the network, attaching limitations on processing and handling of the electronic mail message by a recipient;

initially transmitting said electronic mail message over said network to a central electronic mail server;

storing said electronic mail message at said electronic mail server;

upon request by the recipient, encrypting said electronic mail message, sending the encrypted electronic mail message to a viewer applet installed on said recipient computer, and decrypting said electronic mail message as it is received by the viewer applet so as to display said message; and

causing said central server and viewer applet to implement said processing and handling limitations.

23. A method of controlling an electronic mail message as claimed in claim 21, further comprising the steps of encrypting said electronic mail message is carried out by said central electronic mail server using a public key generated by the viewer applet, said viewer applet being arranged to generate said public key and also a corresponding private key used to decrypt said message.

24. A method of controlling an electronic mail message as claimed in claim 21, further comprising the steps of causing said viewer applet to request forwarding of said electronic mail message stored on said central mail server to a second recipient computer, encrypting said electronic mail message using a public key of a copy of said viewer applet installed on said second recipient computer, and sending said stripped electronic message to said second recipient computer for storage in a memory of the second recipient computer.

25. A method of developing mailing lists, comprising the steps of:
sending an electronic mail message to an initial list of recipients;
requiring that forwarded versions of said electronic mail message be routed through at least one central mail server;
tracking all transactions involving said electronic mail message; and
using a record of at least a portion of said transactions to expand said electronic mailing list.

